

Individual Decisions and Collective Success

SUBMITTED BY: WGYP Summer Instructor

SUBJECT(S): Communication, Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

This lesson encourages students to think about how decisions are made in teams when individuals choose to break away. In the article highlighted in the lesson plan, an individual breaks off from the team due to health concerns. It is very common for members to leave a team midway through. Students think through the difficulty of balancing individuals' decisions and a team's collective objectives.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Management, III. Business Organization
- Communication, III. Workplace Communication

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Three Critical Steps to Help You Choose a College”](#)
- [“The Search Is On: How to Pick the Right College”](#)
- [“Teamwork with a Marshmallow on Top”](#)
- [“Graduates Define Success”](#)
- [“Embracing Leadership in an Era of Activism”](#)
- [“Debate and the Appeal of Opposing Views”](#)

Common Core Standard(s):

Reading Informational Text–RI.9-10.1.; RI.9-10.2.

Speaking and Listening–SL.9-10.1.

Purpose:

- After this lesson, students will have a more nuanced understanding of how individuals must balance their own desires for group success.
- They will debate this issue as a class and receive feedback about their arguments.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [“Expedition to Ecuador: Leadership and Teamwork at 19,000 Ft.”](#)

Activity:

Introduction (5-8 min)

To begin, ask students to imagine they are on a team climbing Mount Everest, but 500 feet from the summit (or top) they feel so sick that they may not be able to go on. What would they do? Would they turn around for the sake of the team, or would they keep going?

From the answers, start getting them to think about collective success of a team and individual decisions and input. Sometimes a person has to take a step back for the greater good. Should they? Why or why not? Think through these situations out loud, playing devil’s advocate when necessary to get students to be more critical about such decision-making.

Silent Reading (10 min)

Have them read the Knowledge@Wharton article on their own.

Small Group Work (10 min)

Ask them to answer the following questions about the article:

- What do they think about Jamie’s decision? If there is disagreement in the groups, ask them to talk it out and make an argument about why Jamie was right or not right in making the decision he did.
- What would they have done?
- How do you balance individual wants and needs with the collective success of a group?

Debate (5 min prep-10 min debate)

Divide students into two groups: For and Against

Tell them they are debating the following statement:

Jamie made the correct decision in turning back from the summit and letting the team go on without him.

In groups, ask them to come up with arguments for their group and counter-arguments. They can use the details from the article to come up with arguments. Each group should also have an opening statement and closing statement.

Once they are ready, ask students to debate the issue for 10 minutes. At the end, the teacher should give feedback about their performance and the persuasiveness of each group's argument. The teacher can also discuss what happened during the debate if any individual felt disagreement about the team's debating strategy.

Tying It All Together:

In this lesson, students are asked to think about how an individual's choices can affect the team. They then work through this scenario by debate and work as a team themselves. The teacher should be able to bring the discussion back to the meta-level and ask students to talk about leadership and teamwork within each debate team.

Work Outside the Classroom:

This lesson provides an intro to lots of fundamental topics, such as teamwork, decision-making and ethics. For more insight into factors that influence the decisions we make, have your students read the Wharton Global Youth Program article, "[Three Critical Steps to Help You Choose a College](#)." This is a simple, yet powerful look at key strategies to help you reach important decisions.

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